

# Toquop's environmental safeguards mitigate any concerns

The Bureau of Land Management recently conducted a meeting in St. George for the purpose of soliciting public comment on the proposed Toquop power generation facility. If the site currently being considered for the proposed 750 megawatt Toquop unit were chosen, prevailing winds would bring some portion of the power plant's emissions into neighboring Washington County at least part of the time. This is also the case with Nevada Power & Light's Reed Gardner plant located in nearby Moapa.

The Reed Gardner plant in Moapa first became operational in 1965. Unit Two was added in 1968, Unit Three in 1976, and Unit Four in 1983. Each of the NPL units has sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) scrubbers, while Unit Four contains a baghouse for fly ash capture and to reduce particulate emissions. Natural-gas igniters and combustion upgrades are planned as future add-ons for the fourth unit.

As the publicly elected board of commissioners in Washington County, we recognize that this issue is complex and emotional.

First and foremost, our air quality is extremely important to all of us who live and work in Washington County. We stand firmly opposed to any initiative that would demonstrably deteriorate the air quality or adversely impact the quality of life for the citizens of Washington County.

Washington County serves as a retirement haven for many. Dependable, affordable power is necessary, especially during our hot summer months when our reliance on air conditioning is critical and affects the public's health and well-being. Our hospital and local businesses require a dependable supply of electricity. Our per-capita demand for electricity has increased steadily over the past decade as the county's growing population has accelerated the requirement for electrical power.

As commissioners, we are firmly in support of developing a balanced energy portfolio. Unfortunately, after assessing the current situation, we do not feel that the solar-power industry has matured to the point that it can be considered an economically viable alternative to the Toquop proposal. Further, wind studies conducted in our area have demonstrated to our satisfaction that there is insufficient wind to generate sustainable, economically feasible power as a primary energy source.

Although many advances are being made, such as hybrid cars and other technologies that can lessen our carbon footprint, we see no alternative to the combustion of fossil fuels in the near future for satisfying the energy and electrical requirements of our citizens.

With that being the case, we feel there is a marked advantage to the efficient and clean burning of western coal as opposed to increasing our reliance on foreign oil and natural gas at this time.

Therefore, after reviewing the Toquop proposal and its environmental safeguards, we feel that our initial concerns have been satisfied. While we reserve the right to review and assess further developments as they may occur, we feel that any potential adverse impact on Washington County's air quality and its citizens has been effectively mitigated by the current proposal.

Alan D. Gardner  
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St. George